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RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA IMMEDIATE 1751
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE IMMEDIATE 3126
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002227

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [JA](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: JAPAN-DPRK REACH AGREEMENT ON ABDUCTIONS

REF: A. TOKYO 1843 - ABDUCTEE PARENTS MEET WITH AMBASSADOR

[1](#)B. TOKYO 1755 - ABE-YAMASAKI SPAR OVER DPRK POLICY

[1](#)C. TOKYO 1778 - FUKUDA DAMAGE CONTROL ON DELISTING

[1](#)D. TOKYO 1741 - FAMILIES SEEK CONTINUED ATTENTION

[1](#)E. TOKYO 1737 - NO GAP WITH U.S. ON DELISTING

[1](#)F. TOKYO 1675 - LDP YAMASAKI SAYS LIFT SANCTIONS

[1](#)G. TOKYO 1641 - INITIAL REACTION TO DPRK DEAL

TOKYO 00002227 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, reasons 1.4(b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Japanese and North Korean negotiators have agreed to the basic outlines of a plan to move forward on resolution of the abduction issue and possible normalization of diplomatic ties. The agreement spells out the DPRK's commitment to conduct a full investigation into the fate of Japan's abductees, preferably by the fall, and provides for regular updates and access by Japanese investigators to concerned parties, documents, and related sites. The stated goal of the investigation is to "discover abductees who are alive and return them to Japan." In exchange, Japan has pledged to lift restrictions on personnel exchanges and chartered flights, timed to the opening of the investigation. The two sides also agreed to continue discussions on the return of the four "Yodo-go" hijackers and port calls by North Korean ships. Some abductee family members and support groups acknowledge the agreement as a small measure of progress, but remain concerned by the requirement that Japan lift sanctions before the investigation is completed. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) North Korea has agreed to Japanese demands to re-investigate the fate of Japanese abductees. The agreement, as outlined by MOFA, sets the modalities for the investigation as follows:
-- The DPRK will conduct a "full-scale" investigation to take "concrete steps" towards the resolution of the abductions issue. The objective should be to "discover live abductees and return them to Japan." The agreement requires the DPRK to address the fate of "all" Japanese abductees, not just the core group of 17 recognized on Japan's official list.
-- The investigation is to be conducted by a DPRK investigation committee constituted by the authorities in Pyongyang. Ideally, the committee should strive to complete its work by the fall.
-- The DPRK will update and consult with Japan, and provide information on any live abductees discovered during the course of the investigation.
-- The DPRK will also "cooperate" with efforts by Japanese

authorities to "directly confirm" the outcome of the investigation, granting access to relevant personnel, materials, and sites.

13. (SBU) In return, Japan has pledged to lift restrictions on personnel exchanges and entry of North Korean charter flights at the same time that the DPRK initiates the investigation. The agreement leaves the exact timing to further coordination between the parties. MOFA has told the Embassy that the date could be set as early as next week. Both sides have also agreed to hold consultations on two issues held over from bilateral talks in June -- the return talks of the four "Yodo-go" hijackers to Japan and entry of DPRK ships to Japanese ports for the purpose of loading "humanitarian aid and commodities." Lead Japanese negotiator Akitaka Saiki conceded to the press that the two sides had been unable to reach an agreement on those issues.

14. (C) Japan seems to have gotten much of what it wanted out of the latest round of talks, including a relatively short timeframe for the investigation and a commitment to allow access to Japanese investigators for verification. At the same time, Japan was able to obtain agreement that this be a purely North Korean investigation, alleviating concerns that direct participation could make the Japanese government appear complicit in any unsatisfactory outcomes. Japan also does not have to make the first move on lifting sanctions, a point that raised an outcry among hard-liners when an initial agreement was reached in Singapore back on June 13.

15. (C) The benefits for the DPRK are less clear. Port access for North Korean ships is not only of symbolic importance, but would potentially allow North Korea to reopen what had previously been seen as a lucrative route for obtaining hard

TOKYO 00002227 002.2 OF 002

currency and other commodities. Most Japanese press reports were quick to attribute the DPRK's willingness to make a deal with Japan to its concern over the lack of progress in talks with the United States, and stressed that the bilateral agreement reached on the morning of August 13 is dependent on what happens at the Six-Party Talks. A MOFA contact working the talks from Tokyo told the Embassy that the DPRK appeared ready to reach an agreement this time, and that the atmospherics were more positive than in the past. He speculated that the DPRK might believe it can use the bilateral agreement with Japan to move the Six-Party Process forward in advance of U.S. elections. An Embassy media contact agreed that U.S. pressure was largely responsible for bringing the DPRK to the table, but stressed the importance of maintaining a hard-line on verification in the Six-Party context. North Korean lead negotiator Song Il-ho was quick to tell the press that any "betrayal" of the agreement would lead to a breakdown in dialogue. Song allegedly fought to include language obligating Japan to "take measures to create an atmosphere to improve relations," as a way for the DPRK to opt out of the agreement, according to Jiji Press.

16. (C) Foreign Minister Koumura described the agreement as "progress" and said it would bring the two sides "closer to the stage of action for action." Earlier in the week, he had referred to the June 13 agreement as "promise for promise." He described the ratio of importance between the abductions issue and the return of the Japanese hijackers as "below 99 to one." New Minister for Abductions Kyoko Nakayama indicated acceptance of a partial lifting of sanctions, and expressed hope that relations with the DPRK are entering "a new phase," now that an investigation will be conducted "from the beginning, with the presumption that the abductees are alive and not dead."

17. (C) Abductee support groups are less positive, with several leaders quoted as saying that Japan has lost yet another diplomatic card by agreeing to lift sanctions before the investigation is concluded. Some family members, asserting that the DPRK controls any remaining abductees and

already knows their whereabouts, have complained that the time-line is too long. Shigeru Yokota, father of abductee Megumi Yokota, was slightly more hopeful, acknowledging the time-line itself as "half-step progress." His wife, Sakie, told the Embassy she would wait to be briefed by DG Saiki on August 15 before making a judgment. An Embassy media contact noted that convincing the families will be key to the government's efforts to resolve the issue. Coordination between MOFA and Minister Nakayama will also be important, he said, particularly given concerns among the abductee groups that she had been excluded from the process in June. Nakayama apparently insisted this time that the DPRK agree to two specific terms -- an investigation that goes "back to the drawing board" and appointment of investigators with direct access to the DPRK leadership.

18. (C) The bilateral talks, originally scheduled for August 11-12, got off to a slow start the first day, as lead Japanese negotiator Akitaka Saiki presented his demands and settled in to await a response the following day. Discussions heated up the second day, with the two sides working straight through meal times and well into the morning of the third day to hammer out an agreement. A major sticking point was reportedly the wording on the objectives of the investigation with regard to return of live abductees. In its official press release, MOFA noted that Saiki pressed for a "comprehensive resolution" of such issues as abductions, nuclear weapons, missiles, Japan's "unfortunate past" with the Korean Peninsula, ultimately leading to normalization of diplomatic relations. The DPRK criticized Japan for its "oppression" of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan ("Chosen Soren").
SCHIEFFER